

# LION



Lions Clubs International

LIONMAGAZINE.ORG DECEMBER 2014

## The Lives of Lions

Why It's Great to be a Lion—  
in Our Own Words



Nita Siregar of Indonesia with her daughter





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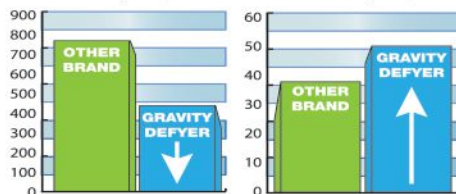


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## JOIN THE LIONS WORLDWIDE WEEK OF SERVICE JANUARY 10 – 16!

Join us for this special Centennial Service Challenge event that brings Lions around the world together for a week of celebration and service. It's a great opportunity to showcase your club and celebrate the birthday of our founder, Melvin Jones. You decide how you want to serve!



### **Engage Our Youth –**

Host a project that helps youth in your community.



### **Share the Vision –**

Help neighbors who are blind or living with low vision.



### **Relieve the Hunger –**

Organize a food drive or a meals program to fight hunger.



### **Protect Our Environment –**

Host an environmental project to make your community a better place for everyone.

### **Earn Centennial Recognition**

Report your project through the MyLCI Service Activity Report to earn a Centennial Banner Patch for your club!

Start planning your project today and join Lions around the globe in the Worldwide Week of Service January 10-16, 2015!

[lions100.org](http://lions100.org)



# A Message From Our President

December 2014 • Volume 97 • Number 5

## Who Am I? I'm a Lion

I began carving out my place in the world in my 20s. I was a husband, father, sales manager, musician and artist. Those were my identities. I also engaged in a variety of other hobbies and activities including serving as a Lion. Over time, slowly but then suddenly, being a Lion was not something I did. It became who I was. I saw it as a calling, my way of contributing to society in a powerful and highly effective way. My identity had become intertwined with being a Lion.

In this issue we profile active Lions from around the world. We interviewed these Lions, and we wrote down what they told us. For them, too, being a Lion is far more than a diversion or pastime. It's how they define themselves and how they interact with their communities. Being a Lion is not merely a way of giving back but also a way of life.

It's fitting we focus on our identity as Lions as the New Year beckons. Identity is never a fixed thing. As filmmaker Steven Spielberg said, "All of us every single year, we're a different person. I don't think we are the same person all our lives." So no matter where you are on the spectrum of Lions—fully engaged, moderately active or disengaged—resolve to become more involved. Based on my own experience, I can assure you that your life will be immensely enriched. The best thing you can do for yourself is to serve others.

Joni and I wish you health and happiness this holiday season. We thank each and every Lion for your service and look forward to a spectacular, service-filled 2015.



### Joe Preston

Bradshaw Mountain Lions Club, Arizona  
Age 62 | President of Lions Clubs International



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# 98th Annual Lions Clubs International Convention Friday, June 26 – Tuesday, June 30, 2015 • Honolulu, Hawaii Convention Registration and Hotel Reservation Form

## Deadlines

- **May 1, 2015:** Deadline for advance registration and hotel reservation. Registrations after this date will be processed in Honolulu.
- **May 1, 2015:** Deadline to receive a refund for a registration cancellation. • **May 15, 2015:** Deadline to receive a refund for a hotel room cancellation.

## REGISTRANT INFORMATION Please type or print name as it appears on passport/photo ID.

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Family (Last) Name \_\_\_\_\_ Badge/Call Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Lion: Club No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Membership No.** \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Lion ☐ Lioness

COMPANION: First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Family (Last) Name \_\_\_\_\_ Badge/Call Name \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Lion: Club No.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Membership No.** \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Lion ☐ Lioness ☐ Guest

CHILD: First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Family (Last) Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Alpha Leo

CHILD: First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Family (Last) Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Alpha Leo

☐ This is my/our first LCI convention. ☐ Not my first convention, I've attended \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Letter of Invitation (If a visa is required for your country of origin) [Club number must be provided above to verify membership]

The plenary sessions are presented in English with simultaneous translation Will you require a headset? ☐ No ☐ Yes

## PACKAGE A: Includes convention registration for each registrant listed above plus one (1) hotel room serviced by shuttle buses during convention.

☐ Before January 9, 2015: Reservation in delegation hotel

☐ After January 9, 2015: ☐ I prefer my delegation hotel ☐ if my delegation hotel is not available, next choice/preference \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Prefer hotel based on: ☐ room rate of \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ location near convention center

Arrival date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure date \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Guests in Room: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Beds Needed ☐ 1 ☐ 2

Special Requirements: ☐ Non-smoking ☐ Wheelchair Accessible ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

• The Hotel deposit is US\$225 for a standard room and US\$350 for a suite. The hotel deposit is not the rate but reserves the room. **One hotel deposit per room, not per person** Your deposit will be credited to your hotel bill at checkout.

## PACKAGE B: ☐ NO ROOM REQUIRED (Registration only for each person listed above.)

## OPTIONAL TICKETED EVENTS I/we plan to attend the following event(s): (Must be registered to attend)

EVENT	DATE/TIME	FEE	QUANTITY	AMOUNT DUE
Melvin Jones Fellow Luncheon	June 29/ 13:30-15:00	US \$70	_____	\$ _____
District Governor/Past District Governor Banquet	June 29/ 20:00-22:00	US \$125	_____	\$ _____
ViridiSTOR "Intelligent" 2015 Convention USB		US \$15	_____	\$ _____

The ViridiSTOR replaces the brochures, handouts, DVDs and more that you would normally carry back home. Enjoy this environmentally smart solution to easily organize and share information. Offered in English – other languages to be advised.

**PAYMENT:** Full payment is required with this form. • US currency only. Checks and money orders must be drawn on US banks.  
• Only Visa, MasterCard & Discover cards accepted. • Contact LCI for wire transfer instructions.

## REGISTRATION FEES

		Adult	Child (17 and under )
Early	(before 9 January, 2015)	US\$110	US\$10
Regular	(10 January through 31 March, 2015)	US\$150	US\$10
Late	(1 April, 2015 – onsite)	US\$170	US\$10

## Package A:

Registrations: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Ticketed Events: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
ViridiSTOR: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Hotel Deposit: US\$ 225.00  
Total Due: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_

OR

## Package B:

Registrations: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Ticketed Events: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
ViridiSTOR: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Due: US\$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check ☐ Bank transfer/deposit (copy must be attached to this form) ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

Your name as it appears on the card \_\_\_\_\_ Credit card **must** be in the name of the registrant.

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Security code (3 digits) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail form and payment to: Lions Clubs International Attn: Convention Division • 300 West 22nd Street • Oak Brook, IL 60523-8842 USA • Allow 4 weeks for processing and mail delivery of your confirmation. Credit Card and Bank Transfer Payments can be faxed to: (1-630) 571-1689 (If you fax, please do not mail original) • Questions? Email us: [registration@lionsclubs.org](mailto:registration@lionsclubs.org) . Please note: Lions Clubs International will be documenting the international convention for promotional purposes. Your participation may be filmed or photographed at this event. Your registration is your consent for use of these images by Lions Clubs International.**

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# Rod Mercado\*

San Francisco Host Lions Club, California

Age 55 | Entrepreneur

I was one of those kids in the Philippines who was not able to go to school. I came from a big family of nine. I had to work at age 7 or 8; I would find used bottles and sell them to a junk shop. I would tell myself then, “I’m not going to grow up to be a poor person.” Even as a kid, I knew that I had the power to change myself, to change my life.

I immigrated to the U.S. in 2007. It was so difficult. That was when the economy was going down. I was going around presenting myself to every single person who could possibly give me a job. I worked as a caregiver for seven months, and then I applied to Pizza Hut. I applied to be a busboy, where you clean the tables and things like that. They said, “I’m sorry, but you’re not qualified.” I said, “But I know how to sweep the floor, clean the toilet, everything.” They said, “No, because we’re taking you on as a manager.” I was just so fortunate.

I was seeing a lot of people crying about how they couldn’t pay their debts anymore, and I saw an opportunity. I said, “My goodness, if I can just help them with their finances, then I can probably have a new career here.” I saved \$5,000, and I decided to open my financial services business. I started the business in a very small room with two telephones. And I have employees now, a lot of employees.

All the hardship that I encountered in life, I used to make more possibilities. I mentor youth now, and I tell them, “Look, this is all temporary, and difficulty will shape your character. Don’t look at this as a burden.”

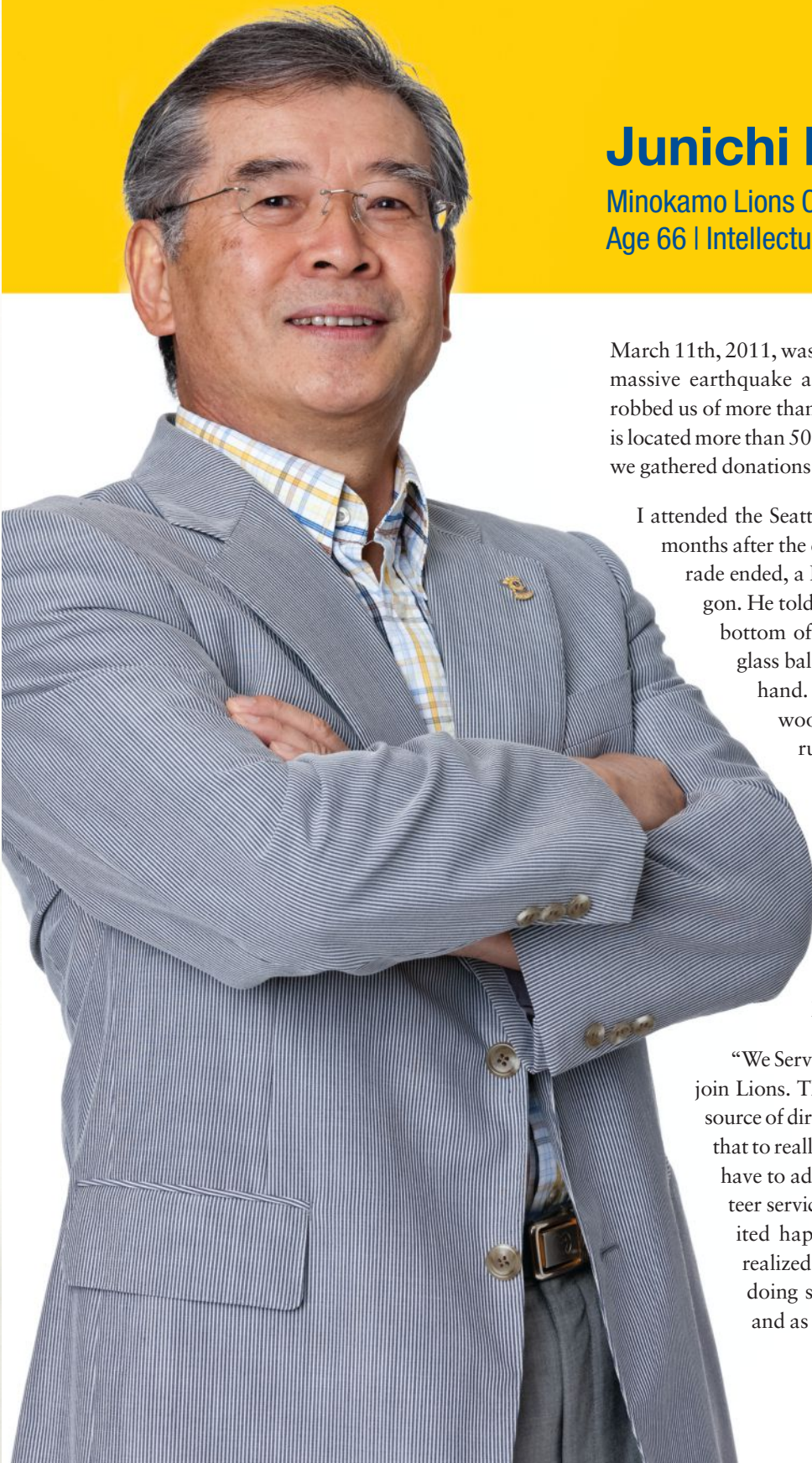
It was difficult for me to decide whether I wanted to be a Lion, because when you come to a new country, you’re concentrating on your career. A friend of mine said, “Come on, give them a chance. You were already doing community service back in Manila.” So I went, and that’s when I realized, “Oh, this is it. I really love this.” That was one of the best decisions I ever made in my life.

And now I’m the second vice district governor. You will probably not believe it, but I know exactly what I want my district to do in the next few years. I’m a relatively new Lion, but I’m a fast learner.

\*As told to a LION Magazine writer (Anne Ford), as with the others profiled in this issue.







## Junichi Hirata

Minokamo Lions Club, Japan

Age 66 | Intellectual Property Manager

March 11th, 2011, was a day we Japanese will never forget. The massive earthquake and tsunami that struck Eastern Japan robbed us of more than 20,000 precious lives. Though our club is located more than 500 kilometers away from the disaster area, we gathered donations and sent emergency supplies right away.

I attended the Seattle International Convention about four months after the disaster. Right after the international parade ended, a Lion approached me. He was from Oregon. He told me, “I’m worried about Japan from the bottom of my heart,” and he handed me a small glass ball, small enough to sit in the palm of your hand. Inside the ball were pieces of rope and wood. The gentleman had collected pieces of rubble that had washed up on the beach and put them inside this glass ball. The rubble was pieces of scrap that had floated across the Pacific Ocean all the way from the disaster area to the U.S. He made and brought those glass balls with him to express his condolences to the Lions of Japan. It was enough to make me feel warm in the heart.

“We Serve” are the two words that attracted me to join Lions. Those two words are the most important source of direction to guide my life. However, I believe that to really get the most out of the Lions motto you have to add “with gratefulness” to the end. Volunteer service with gratefulness is a source of unlimited happiness. Since becoming a Lion I have realized that the limitless happiness I feel from doing service pushes me to improve as a Lion and as a person.

—Tomoko Kawamura

# Sue Topf

Clermont Lions Club, Indiana  
Age 65 | Retired Loan Officer

I've lived in the same house for 40 years, and I raised four kids there. Nearby was a nice 20-acre park which is owned by the Lions. We played and picnicked in that park for four decades, so I knew about Lions for a long time. But no one ever asked me to join, so I just figured it was a closed men's club. Which it was until 1987—actually 1995 for my club.

As time went on and women were allowed to join, my friend Nancy kept bugging me about becoming a Lion. So did my neighbor. I knew they did good things—I didn't know what exactly, other than the park and the community center—and that they were a good and lasting force in our community. I knew the people before I knew the vision, I guess you could say. But I joined in 2005, which I know isn't very long ago in Lion years! But I've been busy—I've been the president of our club twice, district governor twice, region chair, council chair.

And I've been on five missions to Mexico, which is absolutely my favorite project. Those missions change your life. Helping people who have so little is tremendously satisfying. My rusty, 40-year-old Spanish comes back a little more each time. Giving the gift of sight is amazing, and the people are so humble, so thankful. Last trip we fit a 100-year-old man with his first pair of glasses! He had walked down from the mountains in his Sunday best, smiling and laughing. He





# Edward Obreen

Zoetermeer Centaurea Cyanus Leo Club, Netherlands  
Age 25 | Pilot/Resident of Izmir, Turkey

still farmed his fields every day! Helping him see clearly again—nothing beats that.

As for the club positions I've held, well, when I first joined the zone meetings were pitched as something you really didn't want to do. So I don't know how I got talked into becoming vice president. But I'll tell you, at my first cabinet meeting the world opened up. You go outside your club and you find new things to help your club, that's how it works. I got even more involved, and I found new ideas and new ways of connecting with Lions. And eventually I was helping guide other clubs to try new projects and explore new things. A lot of clubs don't like to step out of their comfort zone, but it's vital to do that if Lions are going to stay relevant.

Our club is blessed, with members from teenagers to 90-year-olds. I once installed an 18-year-old and an 81-year-old on the same evening. I have eight grandkids now, and I spend so much time teaching them what a good thing paying it forward is that they think Lions is my own personal club—and I'm happy to say that when it comes to commitment and satisfaction, they are exactly right!

—Todd Schwartz

I moved to Turkey to get a job. But I know everything that happens with my Leo club. We text all the time. I go back about every two months and still am really involved. All the Leos in my club are best friends to each other.

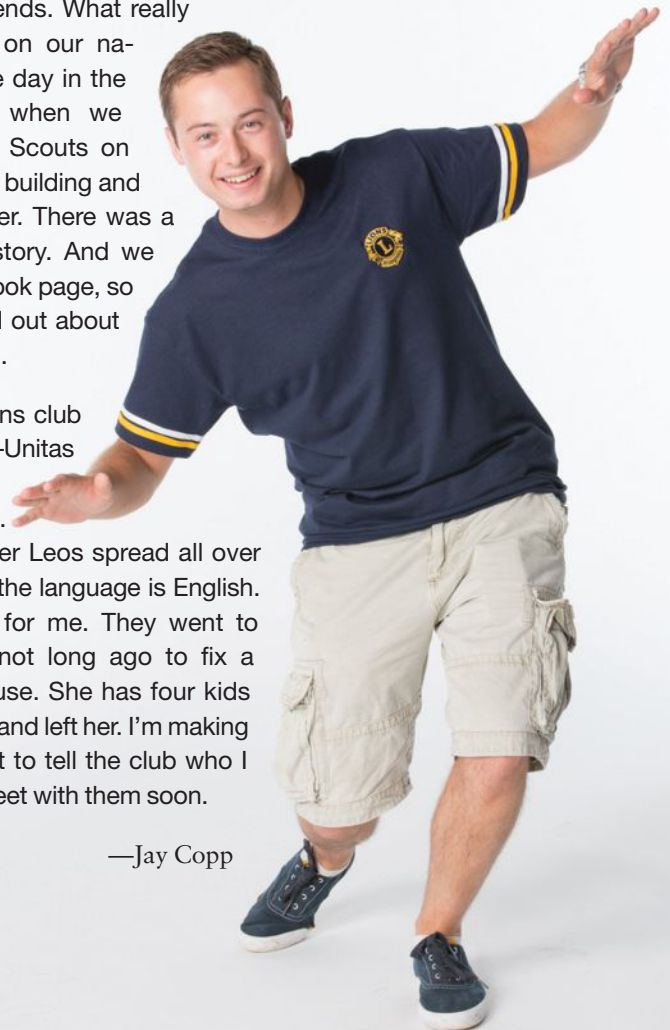
I went to the Leo Europa Forum in Istanbul this year, and I saw the problem that Leos don't know how to reach each other. So I thought, why don't we have an interactive map where you can see how many clubs there are and how many Leos there are? If you're on holiday and you want to serve, or need a hotel, or a place to sleep or eat, you can use the map. It's something that young people would like to use. I worked on it six months, and it's working good.

My mom is a role model for me. She is a positive, active, social person. I try my best to be like her. She's a Lion, and she told me the district governor wanted to start a Leo club. She knew I had started a student group in flight school, so I guess she thought I could do it. I started out inviting two close friends to dinner. Then we invited five other friends. What really helped was on our national service day in the Netherlands when we worked with Scouts on painting their building and building a pier. There was a newspaper story. And we had a Facebook page, so people found out about us and joined.

There's a Lions club in Germany—Unitas Mundi—that meets online.

They're former Leos spread all over Europe, and the language is English. So it's right for me. They went to Amsterdam not long ago to fix a woman's house. She has four kids and her husband left her. I'm making a PowerPoint to tell the club who I am and I'll meet with them soon.

—Jay Copp



# Mahesh Chitnis

Edison Visionary Lions Club, New Jersey

Age 46 | Management Consulting Company Owner

When I was 17 in India, my friends started a new Leo club. I joined for fun because all of my friends were joining. We held the first eye surgery camp managed by Leos when I was 21. I had visited the village where I grew up, and a former teacher asked me why the Lions hadn't held an eye camp there for a while. When the Lions couldn't do it, the Leos took it on. We had 150 patients over three days. A patient at the camp was the mother of one of my elementary school teachers. After her surgery when they took the

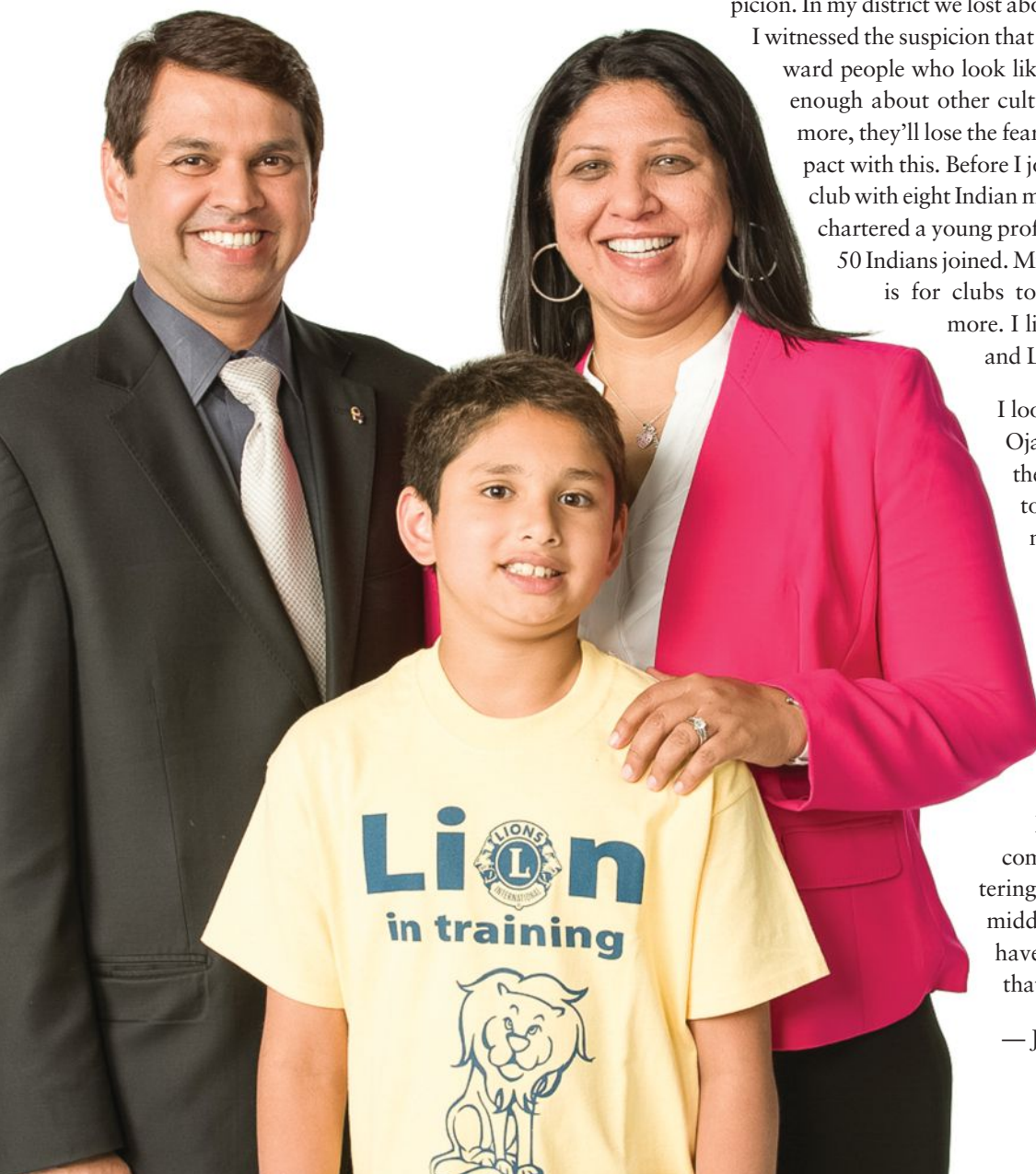
bandages off, I was right there. I watched her see her grandson for the first time. The moment was indescribable. Then she touched my feet—this is a sign of great respect in India and is very rare. Even today, when I think about it I get emotional.

As an immigrant to the United States, I'm aware of the lack of cultural integration that can happen here. Many immigrants live among their own group and stay separated from the larger population. That can create fear and suspicion. In my district we lost about 200 residents on 9/11.

I witnessed the suspicion that happened at that time toward people who look like me. People don't know enough about other cultures, and if we integrate more, they'll lose the fear. Lions can have a big impact with this. Before I joined there was one small club with eight Indian members in my district. We chartered a young professionals club, and about 50 Indians joined. My goal as district governor is for clubs to mirror the community more. I live in a very diverse area, and Lions should reflect that.

I look at my 11-year-old son, Ojas, and his friends and I see the challenges they face due to the Internet and social media. They're not interacting face to face enough. I'm trying to get them more involved in volunteering. Along with my wife, Lion Anu, my son has been to three LCI conventions. It's great to see how passionate he's become about Lions. He's chartering a new Leo club at his middle school. I want him to have a moment like I did at that eye camp years ago.

— Jennifer Gilbert Gebhardt





# Em Legaspi Ang

Bacolod City Host Lions Club, Philippines

Age 48 | Real Estate Developer, City Councilor

I started out as a Leo but even before that I would go with my parents to their Lions projects. My whole extended family were Lions. My husband, Alan, is a Lion and our three children are Leos. Lionism is a family affair.

What I like most is doing medical missions. We live in a country with more than half of the population living below the poverty line. There are many people in remote villages who have never seen a doctor. At times I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work that needs to be done. I'm thankful to know there's a team, a whole organization, of capable people with big hearts.

On one medical mission in a remote town, a middle-aged man came up to us. He was from the next town but rode the bus to thank the Lions for giving him back his eyesight. He had become a carpenter and was making wooden furniture. It feels good to know that we really made a difference in a person's life. And in turn, he's able to help his family and others.

Another time I was campaigning for a seat in the city council and giving my first speech. I was very nervous, and I felt like I was boring the audience. Suddenly, an elderly woman asked to step up to the podium. She told them that she knew me because I was president of the Lions club when she received her cataract surgery. She had been almost blind for a decade before that. She said that she now earns a living making handicrafts and even employs other women in her village. She said she could never forget me.

Last year I was the first woman elected MD 301 council chair. When I look at all the new members' faces, I try to imagine how they see me. I ask myself, have I been a leader that others would want to emulate? Have I conducted myself in a respectable and admirable way?

As a leader, the road can sometimes be lonely. I feel it every time I'm faced with a goliath task and I'm just David with a sling shot. That's how I felt after Super Typhoon Haiyan last year. But whenever I feel almost defeated, I look behind me and see the people who support me in my endeavors. In Lions, you're never alone.

— Jennifer Gilbert Gebhardt



# Wes King

Brookings Harbor Lions Club, Oregon

Age 74 | Commercial Fisherman/Retired Navy

I joined in 2005. To be honest, I just saw something worth doing. It took me a little longer to convince my wife, Carol. She joined a while later when she saw me having so much fun. We work together as Lions pretty much like we do in our marriage of 51 years. If she wants to make a suggestion or say something, I listen. If I want to say something, she listens. We talk together and then decide which way to go.

I first became a Lion when a gentleman named George Fernandez asked me if I liked to help kids. I said, "Sure, I do." George, who's 92 and has been a Lion for something like 66 years, then started to tell me about his club. I went to a meeting, liked the people and my first project was screening kids for vision problems. We still do a lot of that.

I joined the Navy at 17. I dropped out of high school to join so I had to get my GED in the Navy. I retired after 22 years as a warrant officer because I had three teenagers at home, and they were, well, behaving like teenagers. I needed to be home. Their mother needed me to be home. Now they're all grown and successful. I'm really proud of them.

I've been involved for the last five years as a Leo adviser. They know me, and know that I'm speaking to them from experience. Two of them just joined the

club. They're both 19 and full-service Lions from day one. We put them right to work. If you're going to invite people to join your club, you have to give them something meaningful to do. It's an entirely different leadership style than the Navy. If you're working with volunteers, you don't tell them what to do, you ask. I'm excited about being a district governor next year. There are 41 clubs in my district and I'll visit each one of them.

I own three commercial fishing boats and have had as many as five running at the same time, but I don't get to do much fishing because of the time I spend on Lions. And we're only 2 miles from the ocean! I also have some excavators and own a heavy construction company, but usually I'm too busy to use them. I do try to run an excavator around for at least a few minutes when I can find time just because it's so much fun, like a big toy! Who wouldn't want to play in the dirt with one? I may have retired from the Navy, but I'm not retired from life. I like to stay busy. I always say I've led three lives already, and I'm still not done.

— Pamela Mohr





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# Edward Lieberman

Sea Cliff Glen Head Lions Club, New York

Age 63 | Criminal Defense Attorney

I didn't join Lions until I was 51. I had been in Kiwanis in my old community, which didn't have a Lions club. Service was part of my upbringing. My dad was a Mason. I was in the Key Club as a kid. But finally someone asked. The president in 2002 was very aggressive about membership. Michael Imbriano owned a food market. If you shopped there, you were subject to becoming a member. I guess if he didn't have such good food I might not have become a Lion.

Even before I was a Lion, I always knew a lot of people in the community. That's how I became involved in Life's WORC, which runs a group home for special needs kids. I eventually was on their board. They were bringing in Geraldo Rivera for their golf fundraiser, and he was on a tight schedule and needed to land his helicopter. They knew I knew people, so I was able to get clearance for him to land. WORC eventually didn't want to sponsor the golf outing, so I helped transition it into our club.

I became very involved with Lions right away. I was president, district governor, council chair. Right after I became president a Lion came up to me and said, "You know, this is a great steppingstone if you ever want to go into politics." Well, I was busy for a few years as district governor and so on. But I'm now a trustee in town and maybe being mayor is something that could happen.

What took me so long to become a Lion? My kids were older. It was something I wanted to do. It's a great way to be involved in the community and meet people. Nassau County is not that big. But I've met people I never would have met. Some of them are dear friends now. Everyone I meet wants to do the same thing: help others. It's the same when I travel to the international convention or a forum. Being a Lion is a great icebreaker. It's really opened my horizons—people, places, cultures.

Now I'm the one recruiting Lions. When my son graduated from college, I asked him to join. His friends did, too. We've got a nice core of younger people in the club. It's funny how things work. I met the parents of my son's friend, and the dad became a Lion. So are my son and his friends. It's the tree of membership—it has a lot of branches.

—Jay Copp





# Hilary Landrum

Waxahachie Lions Club, Texas

Age 35 | Fifth-Grade Teacher

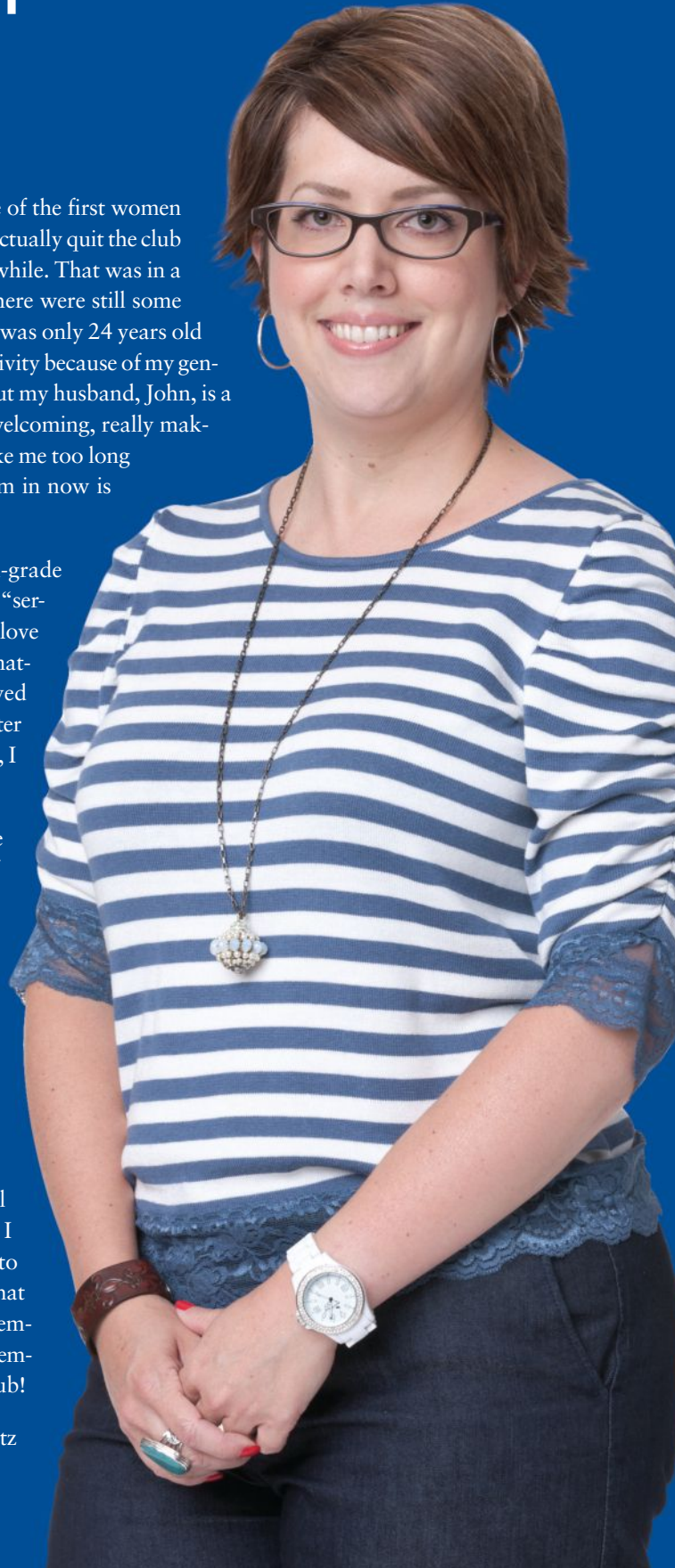
When I became a Lion in 2003, I was one of the first women in my club, and a couple of the older guys actually quit the club because of it! I took that personally for a while. That was in a little town of 2,000 people, and I guess there were still some people there who didn't want to change. I was only 24 years old at the time, so being faced with some negativity because of my gender and also my age really bothered me. But my husband, John, is a Lion, and most every Lion I met was so welcoming, really making me feel "in the pride," that it didn't take me too long to get over that first setback. The club I'm in now is about 30 minutes outside of Dallas.

I'm so glad I became a Lion. I'm a fifth-grade teacher, and someone once told me I have a "servant's heart." It must be true, because I just love to help those in need, and being a Lion is a natural extension of that. I've always believed that we each need to make the world a better place. Whether I help one person or 1,000, I know I've done something right.

Our club gets involved and gets things done for our community, and I'm really proud of that. We've helped build houses with Habitat for Humanity. We bought a van for a family with a disabled child. We helped some of my own students who needed glasses but couldn't afford them.

There are so many distractions for people my age, so not enough of us volunteer our time to serve. The median age in my club is late 60s, I'd say. My husband was district governor a couple years ago, and all the other governors were twice his age, I think. We as Lions need to do something to get younger people involved. And I know that these days, if we get some more young members, women members and more diverse members, at least nobody's going to quit the club!

—Todd Schwartz





## Dr. Celia Holder

Christ Church West Lions Club,  
Barbados, West Indies  
Age 47

My mother was a cook in a children's home and my aunt Daphne was a teacher, and they always went that extra step for the children. I saw them provide clothing, meals and furniture and household items for others in need in our neighborhood. They looked after the elderly and sick, and even helped raise other children. They grew up in an era when people showed love and care for others. I feel that spirit of kindness is really lacking in people today.

Any good I do is a tribute to their example. That's one reason I became a Lion. I'm the only Lion in my family and the only medical doctor in my club. Being a doctor makes it easier and much more comfortable for people when our club does health screenings. I'm able to immediately refer people to a specialist for further care.

I believe strongly in empowering our youth to be self-sufficient and productive. Actually, my first job was teaching biology at a high school after I got my first degree. So I'm always eager to help maximize their education and help them excel. Our club is helping pay tuition for some students at a school for the deaf, blind and autistic. We don't just pay tuition, though. We're supporting a project that teaches them basic life skills as they grow into adults. We also fund



training projects, like one that teaches sewing skills so people can support themselves. We want our projects to be relevant to our own local needs and culture in Barbados.

I've had a few of those "aha" moments since I became a Lion. Once I bought school uniforms for a family. I met the mother and handed them over to her quickly. As I turned to leave, she stopped me and just kept hugging me with such emotion. She thanked me over and over.

When I first joined Lions, it was to give back to my community. But Lions has given me a lot, too. It's helped me grow beyond what's known and familiar. Because I feel like I've been really fortunate in life, I want to do good for someone else. Lions lets me do this on a much wider scale.

— Pamela Mohr

## Jim Bennett

New Haven Lions Club, Connecticut  
Age 65 | Retired Client Services Manager

**Jim:** Age is an issue for our club—the average age is over 70—but getting new members is all about just asking! We could double our membership if we all just asked one person. Just ask! My dad joined Lions in 1957, and I remember lots of laughter and fun among his fellow Lions when I was a kid. He was president of the club, but no one asked me or my brother to join! Just ask! I finally joined in 1980.

**Joan:** Jim asked me to join in 1992. Later that year he asked me to marry him. I think I had to pass the Lions test before I could pass the marriage test! I agree that it's all about getting out there and asking people to participate. We chartered a Leo club to get young people involved. And I have been the chairperson for recruiting volunteers—it's so rewarding, when I get them to come once I have them for life!

**Jim:** We've both been district governors. Our closest friends are Lions. We spend our vacations with other Lions. I guess our lives kind of revolve around family, Lions and church—and we wouldn't have it any other way.

— Todd Schwartz



## Joan Bennett

New Haven Lions Club, Connecticut  
Age 70 | Retired Sales Manager



# Martina Wetzig-Krebs

Linth Lions Club, Switzerland

Age 54 | Artist

I grew up in Springe, a typical beautiful village in Germany. Once a year the different clubs in town celebrated with a fair. Lions were part of it. I was just a child, but I was very impressed to see the prominent people of my town spending their valuable time trying to help others. One year after the parade I went to the Lions booth. I was so nervous my heart was beating aloud. I asked what I had to do to join. They smiled at me and were nice but told me I could not join. Years later I realized that there were only men in my hometown club.

After I gave birth to my daughter my husband and I decided to move to Switzerland, where I worked as an IT contract manager. Life couldn't have been any better, and a friend asked me to join a Lions club.

Then I was badly hurt in a car accident. A woman not concentrating crashed into my car. After that, life changed dramatically. God had been looking out for me, but it took a long time to heal. I had to quit my job, which I loved. But I never lost my positive thinking. We cannot change our past, but we always have the choice to decide how to feel about what happens to us.

I believe that when we give we get a lot back. My mother toughened me up this way. She often asked me when I was a child, "What is wrong with this sentence: I can not?" It is "not." You can. You have to believe in yourself.

I am not working as an IT contract manager any longer, but this also means that I can live my other passion—art. I work as an artist. I do as much as I can for the Lions club. I am very thankful for my life and want to help others that are not as blessed as I am. Our club really does a lot to help others. Some are handicapped and just need a wheelchair or money for therapy. We also support other organizations. Recently we built a playground in a children's home. I am impressed by the spirit of people with disabilities even though their lives are not easy. I love to help others, and this is why I love to be a part of the Lions.

—Jay Copp





## Maurice Ibok

Calabar Atakpa Lions Club, Nigeria  
Age 39 | Finance Manager

I live in the capital of Cross River State, Calabar, which is a seaport near the Atlantic Ocean. It is a city of some 370,000 people. In September of 1997, when I was 22 years old, I was inducted into Lions Clubs International as a Leo. My childhood friend, now Lion Ekpe Nta Bassey, introduced me to the Lions. Ekpe was always going to work on club projects like cleaning of the surroundings or assisting the aged and kids. He would put on a neatly made Leo vest. I liked that, and also seeing young people carry out service activities in the society without being rewarded—but always appreciated—attracted me a lot.

My most rewarding project so far has been the cornea transplant we funded. I was the chairperson of the committee for that. The fact we could join together and gather resources to restore a person's sight was fulfilling.

I have three hobbies: spending time with my family, traveling, and serving humanity. I would like Lions in the U.S and Europe to know that Lions in Africa are passionate in our service to humanity. We are "Loving Individuals Offering Needed Services."

—Todd Schwartz

My husband is German, and he works at Siemens in Germany. I had thought that Lions was for the bourgeois only because in the past most members I knew were government officials and upper-class people. Nowadays the club is totally different; anyone can become a Lion as long as they are social and willing to share with others.

I am from an ordinary family, and it was a very hard struggle until I graduated from college. I went to the University of Indonesia majoring in international relations. I worked hard to pay the tuition fee because my family wasn't very rich, but I'm glad now that my hard work has been "refunded proportionately" by God.

I've been to many countries—four in Asia, 13 in Europe, Canada, six big cities in the U.S. With my experience traveling around the world, I felt very small before God. I was amazed with his astonishing creations. Some people have worked harder than others, but they probably haven't got the equivalent returns. Still I'm certain that God loves us very much. My experience in traveling wasn't the reason for me to become a Lion. I became a Lion because I like being a social creature. I like to share things, and I am thankful with what I have now.

A project I really liked was when we arranged free eye exams for students. They didn't check their eyes, presumably due to financial problems. I always take my daughter, Michelle, with me to every Lions activity whenever it doesn't disturb her school activities. My children know how important Lions' services are. I wanted them to learn how to become human, someone who is always grateful to God. I'm not compelling my children to become Lions; they'll have to decide for themselves. We are all helping each other. I like being a Lion; I have to be able to serve people in need, as best as I can, with God's help.

—Jay Copp

## Nita Siregar

Tangerang Selatan Puri Siwi Lions Club, Indonesia  
Age 49





# Olga De Araujo Moreira

Belo Horizonte Itacolomi Lions Club, Brazil

Age 76 | Retired Paralegal/Law Librarian; widowed with three children

I volunteer at the Creche Ana Maria de Castro Veado—a day care. The municipality of Belo Horizonte is responsible for it. Members of my club are part of its board. We donated a playroom with a television set. Earlier this year we bought a water tank for the center.

This day care is located in a sprawling slum. The mothers need to work. Or some parents are criminals or drug addicts. The kids are here from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. They get breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, classes and learn the basics of hygiene. Everything about children touches me emotionally. They are innocent, needy. We as adults have to take good care of them.

Two of my children live near Orlando. I lived there from 1998 to 2005. When I moved back to Brazil, a neighbor in my condo complex invited me to the Lions annual convention in Pocos de Caldas, a town in my home state. I was delighted to be there: the lectures, parade, the activities, the friends I made. On the way back home, still inside the bus, the president of the Belo Horizonte Club invited me to join. A month and a half later, in a solemn ceremony, I became a member.

We [club members] do a lot of crafts such as crochet, knitting and embroidery of dish towels. We sell them at our annual bazaar to raise funds for our services. We buy baby clothes for single mothers, toiletries for nursing homes, donate wheelchairs, plant trees.

I'm worried about the future of our club. We're mostly middle class, some upper middle class. We live in nice neighborhoods. The meetings start at 8:30 and finish at midnight. We're afraid of driving home. Most of us are elderly. Bela Horizonte is the capital of Minas Gerais. There are nearly 3 million people. Public safety is an issue. Assaults and robberies are common. Attendance is declining. When we meet again in January I will try to change the meetings to the afternoon.

When we get new members, I ask them to get their children to join. They say their kids are too busy. In the past, Brazilian families might have had maids to take care of their kids. That's no longer true. But, still, I'm not convinced. I love my Lions friends, my club and Lions Clubs International. What really motivates me is to selflessly serve others. By donating my time, I can contribute to the relief and comfort of those who are suffering.

—Jay Copp



# Winster D. Ceballos

Passaic-Clifton Lions Club, New Jersey

Age 34 | Academic Administrator

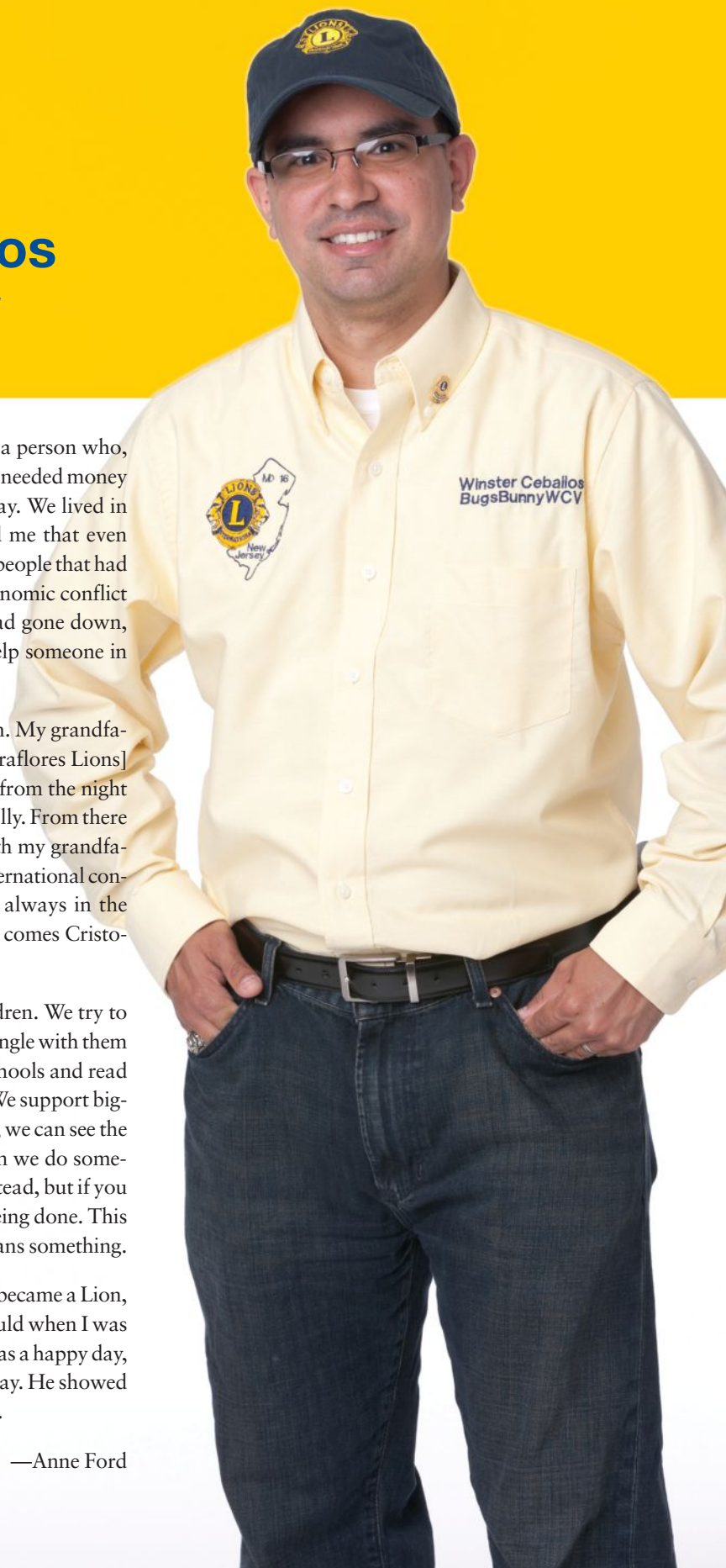
My grandfather, Cristobal, was a lawyer. He was a person who, if somebody came to him and needed help—if they needed money or whatever—he would not turn any of them away. We lived in the Dominican Republic, and he always showed me that even though we didn't have that much, there were other people that had even less than us. Back then there was a lot of economic conflict because the economy was really bad. The peso had gone down, and there was a lot of inflation. So if we could help someone in any way, we would.

I was 3 years old when I got involved with Lionism. My grandfather chartered a new club [the Santo Domingo Miraflores Lions] in 1983, and my grandmother has pictures of me from the night of the charter. That started my whole Lions life, really. From there I became a Cub. I used to attend all the events with my grandfather, even the district meetings. I went to my first international convention with him when I was 9—this little kid, always in the middle of all the adults. People used to say, “Here comes Cristobal and his tail” because I was always with him.

My club now, we help with a camp for blind children. We try to be there when they go for lunch or dinner just to mingle with them and make them feel comfortable. We also go to schools and read to children between kindergarten and first grade. We support big-scale projects too, but by doing these little projects, we can see the kids laughing. Or we can see how they react when we do something for them. You can always send donations instead, but if you do that, you don't actually see that something is being done. This way, you can really see that what you're doing means something.

My grandfather passed away in 1998. When I first became a Lion, I joined his club, because I had promised him I would when I was old enough. My grandmother was my sponsor. It was a happy day, but it was a sad day also because he had passed away. He showed me so much, and I try to continue what he started.

—Anne Ford





# Rita Iheme

Warri Ruby Lions Club, Nigeria

Age 45 | Travel Agency Owner

When I went to my first Lions club meeting seven years ago, I was immediately touched and impressed with what they were all about. I loved becoming a Lion, but I had the impression that you needed to be rich to be a Lion because there was so much money needed for projects. One day I was talking about this with a senior Lion, Gochua Toritse. She said you don't have to be rich, just have a giving heart. She told me it's not how much you have, but the spirit in which you want to give that matters. It was then that I realized it's the contribution of like minds that actually makes being a Lion interesting and meaningful.

We worked with other nearby clubs to renovate a primary school. The school had no roof, no chairs or tables, no toilet. There was no atmosphere for learning. We built a roof and contributed 100 chairs and tables. The Lions turned the school around. The children could have a chance to learn.

I was at the school when it was commissioned; participating in the joy of the children seeing their new school made me so happy. You had to see these children when they came to the school. They were overwhelmed. They thought we Lions were sent from heaven! We later heard that the students were showing up early for the school day and that more new students started going to school.

The only real concern I have as a Lion is membership growth, but we're working on that. We've been doing more school

projects, renovating and bringing books. We invite people to come and witness the changes in the schools. They only need to see what we're doing and people are so moved they want to become Lions too.

— Jennifer  
Gilbert  
Gebhardt



# Genevieve Jones

Port of Spain 1st Officers Lions Club, Trinidad and Tobago  
Age 38 | Cytoscreener

I am from Trinidad, one of the most southern Caribbean islands. It's really beautiful. We have basically either sun or rain—nothing else. A lot of people come to visit us for the beach.

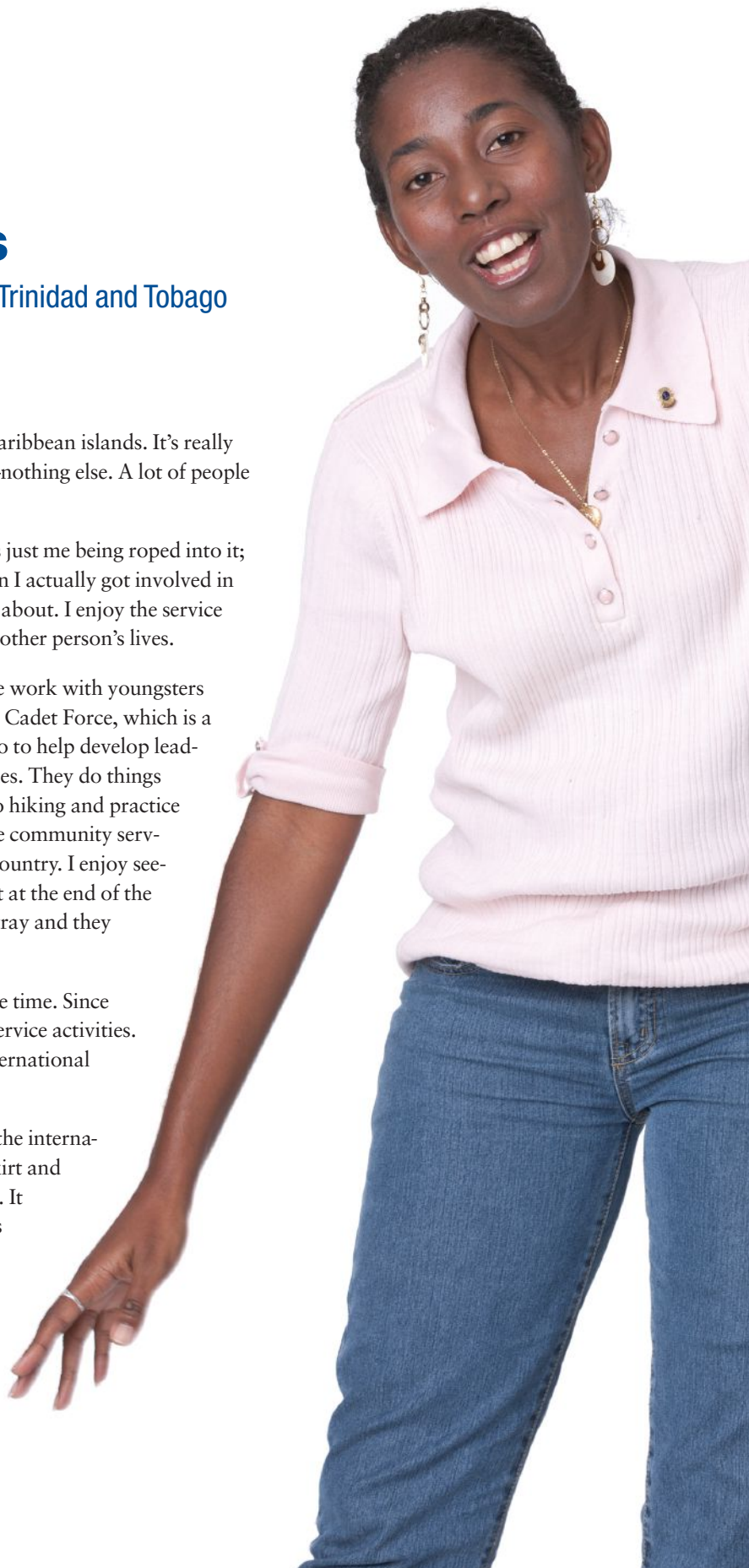
Our club was established in 2007. At first it was just me being roped into it; I didn't know anything much about Lions. When I actually got involved in it, then I understood what the organization was about. I enjoy the service aspect of it, being hands-on, effecting change in other person's lives.

The main focus of our club is youth projects. We work with youngsters who are involved with the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, which is a program that was established over 100 years ago to help develop leadership skills and instill discipline and moral values. They do things like learning to use a map and compass. They go hiking and practice outdoor skills. And they are required to do some community service. It helps them become better citizens of our country. I enjoy seeing the youngsters develop and making sure that at the end of the day they achieve their goals, so they don't go astray and they aren't involved in any criminal activity.

My mom is a Lion as well. We joined at the same time. Since joining Lions, we do more things together like service activities. This year I had her tag along with me for the international convention, and she thoroughly enjoyed it.

My best memory from this year's convention is the international parade. I marched, and I wore a simple skirt and top in Trinidadian colors—red, white and black. It was nice to see the traditional costumes of Lions from all the different countries. We all gathered in one location and recognized that no matter what color, creed or race, we are all here to serve.

—Anne Ford





# Helen Quintanilla

San Diego Executive Lions Club, California

Age 60 | Cash Management Supervisor

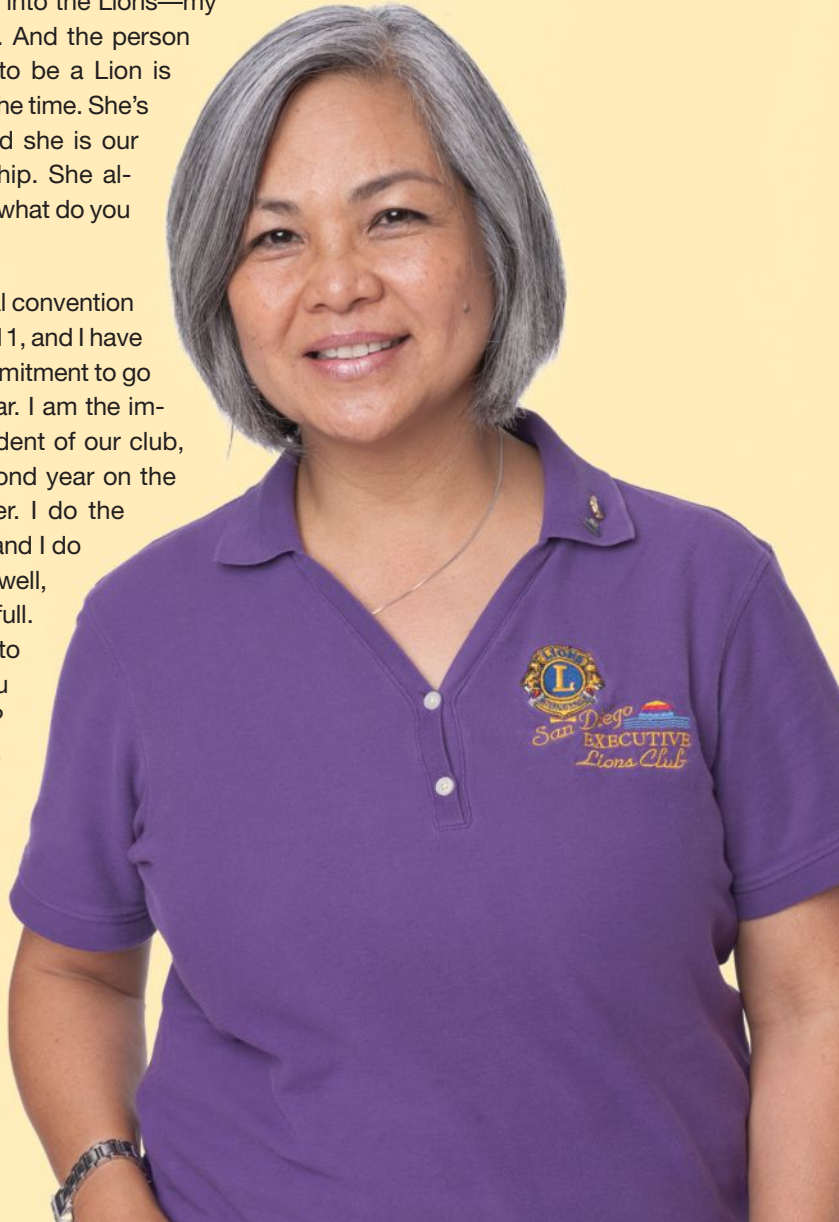
I'm not a nurse, but when my club goes into the community to do health and wellness fairs, I help take blood pressures. A lot of people do not even know that they have high blood pressure. They are the breadwinners for their families. We educate them, let them know that they need to monitor this. Making a difference in one life—that's very, very big for me.


I'm very proud of our club being involved in providing nonprescription reading glasses, too. A lot of people, they don't really have the means to go and buy the glasses. When you see someone we've helped reading a magazine while they wear their glasses. ... I get emotional about it at times.

I brought my family into the Lions—my sisters, my brother. And the person who recruited me to be a Lion is working with us all the time. She's almost 80 now, and she is our chair for membership. She always says, "Helen, what do you want me to do?"

My first international convention was in Seattle in 2011, and I have made myself a commitment to go to it every other year. I am the immediate past president of our club, and this is my second year on the cabinet as treasurer. I do the district newsletter, and I do our club bulletin as well, so I have my hands full. At night when I go to sleep, I say, "You know what, Lord? Thank you for this good day. Thank you for what we have done. Take care of this body." And I go to sleep.

—Anne Ford



A photograph of Bernice Cheatham, a woman with short, dark, curly hair, smiling and wearing a white polo shirt with dark stripes on the collar and sleeves, and large hoop earrings. She is standing against a plain white background.

I taught middle school science for 27 years. Some children would come to school with the same dress or the same jeans and shirt on every day. And some children would come to school with a pencil or nothing, and I would ask them, “Where are your school supplies?” They would say, “My mother didn’t buy me any.” So the teachers would put some money together and buy them supplies.

## Bernice Cheatham

Brooklyn Stuy Park Lions Club, New York  
Age “39-plus” | Retired Teacher

When I was president of my Lions club, I started the idea of giving backpacks to schools, filled with supplies. And when we distributed those backpacks, the children were so happy and excited and running around and showing their bags to each other and screaming.

And each year, our club donates Thanksgiving baskets with complete meals for families in need, and we deliver the baskets to each family. I will always remember one mother in particular. This mother cried uncontrollably. She was just overwhelmed with emotion. She expressed to us that she had no money and did not know how she was going to feed her children for the special holiday. The feeling I felt that day—it will never leave me.

I always wear my Lion pin, and I have it visible, because this I find starts a conversation about Lionism. I’m very, very happy, always, to talk about it; it just brings good feelings whenever I think about Lionism.

A couple months ago, my best girlfriend asked me, “Why are you always wearing that pin?” I told her, “By the way, I heard that a Lions club that’s 44 years old and all male is looking for female members.” So she said, “What? I think I might be interested.” I said, “Okay, I got an application in my pocket. Fill it out, and I will give it to the president of the club.” Sure enough, today she’s a Lion and enjoying it.

—Anne Ford



# Kam Vara

Milton Keynes Central Lions Club, England

Age 46 | Attorney



I joined my club because I wanted to help and volunteer in my community. But what I found was a family. Even though I moved from London in 2002, it's really only been in the past three years that I've felt settled here and not considered moving back. I missed my family in London, but becoming a Lion really provided me, my wife, Liz, and our children with a sense of belonging right here. It introduced us to an entire new group of friends that we would've never gotten to know. I call them my "Milton Keynes family" since we're all so close. And I'm not just talking about members, but our families as well. We have a lot of impromptu gatherings, and our kids all play together.

Liz and I have both definitely found Lions to be a very family-friendly organization, and I guess that's why it fits into our lives so easily. Both my children, Devan, 6, and Asha, 4, have already said they want to be Lions when they grow up. They're still expecting to see the four-legged variety at meetings!

I was inducted into the club in 2011, became vice president the next year, and president in 2013. Without Liz's support, I wouldn't have been able to take on the role of president for even one year, let alone for two consecutive years. We now have 13 Lions (our 14th member being inducted tonight!), but I've always said that it feels more like we have 26 members. If we didn't all have the support of our partners, we, as a club, wouldn't achieve a fraction of what we do. We don't only help our community. We help and support each other, just the same as any family does.

— Pamela Mohr

# Dr. Neil VanderHorst

100 Mile House Lions Club, British Columbia, Canada

Age 40 | Optometrist

I'm the only optometrist in our small town and wanted to get involved in the community. The Rotary club invited me to join, but the Lions seemed like a better fit so I had been thinking of attending a meeting. Then I went to the 100 Mile House Lions Club annual auction and won the \$500 door prize. I joined the club within a month of that. One of our Lions joked afterward, "That was an expensive but effective recruiting tool!"

My mom is a Lion. She joined when I was at university. I think she did it partly as a way of paying back for my great-uncle. He was blind and Lions in Edmonton got him a guide dog. So I've always been aware of the link between Lions and sight.

I'm the youngest member of my club by a decade, but I think I fit right in. We're all equal around the table. And even though I'm younger there are certainly members who are a lot more active than me. Their age is not a factor when it comes to service. Some of them even play senior hockey. No, I don't play. I can't skate to save my soul. I'm probably one of the few Canadians who can't.

In our small town there is no ophthalmologist, so if someone gets metal in their eye or an eye infection they come to me. Only one other city in our zone has optometrists. Last year I was my club's





# Bart B. Ozbun

Cape Girardeau Noon Lions Club, Missouri  
Age 52 | Financial Adviser

visitation officer, and I found that most of the other clubs had members I already knew as patients. To date I haven't met a Lion that I haven't liked.

I've also enjoyed offering the resources of my practice to clean, sort and measure the glasses Lions collect. I've had two students that I've mentored—one was in optometry school and one later enrolled—come in to measure and clean the glasses. They wanted to do unpaid service. They went on trips to El Salvador and Nicaragua with VOSH International to deliver glasses from Lions.

Kimberly and I have four beautiful girls now. They ride on our Lions' float in the winter parade. I take the two older ones to occasional Lions meetings and as often as possible to service projects. They get a chance to see what daddy does. We have a concessions trailer, and they've helped on that. It's good—it gives them an ethical foundation. It teaches them that to be part of the community they have to take an active interest in the community. Of course, it's a delight to be around them, too.

—Jay Copp

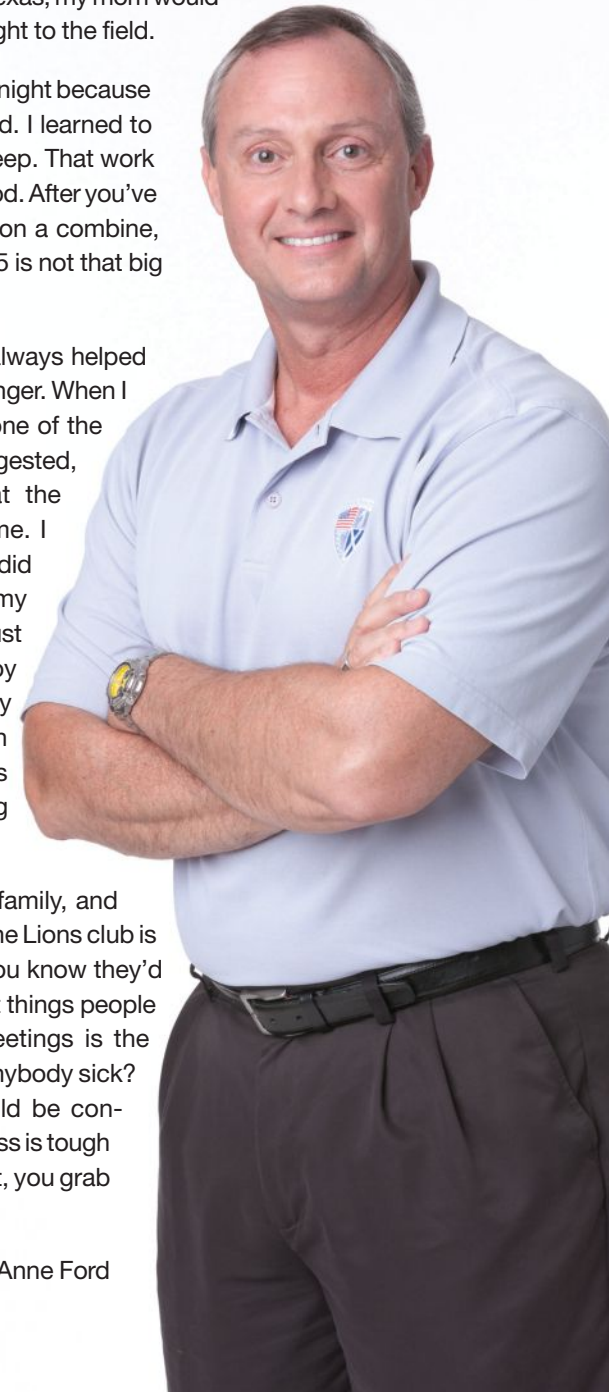
When you grow up on a family farm, you run all kinds of equipment by the time you're about 10. My dad did custom combining, and after I got out of my eighth-grade year I started driving the combines. We went from Texas to the Canadian border with our combines to cut wheat, and then in the winter and fall, he'd take all the equipment down to Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee and cut soybeans and things like that. During summers, while my friends were at the lake, I'd sometimes get in an airplane after school. I'd fly to Texas, my mom would pick me up, and I'd go straight to the field.

You kept going till late in the night because the machines never stopped. I learned to do without a whole lot of sleep. That work ethic kind of gets in your blood. After you've put in 18- to 20-hour days on a combine, going to an office from 9 to 5 is not that big a deal.

My dad was a Lion, and I always helped his club out when I was younger. When I came to Cape Girardeau, one of the individuals at the bank suggested, "You ought to go look at the Lions." It made sense to me. I thought, "Hey, that's what I did growing up." When I told my dad I'd joined the Lions, he just smiled and said, "You'll enjoy it." I think if I had chosen any other club he'd been OK with that too, but obviously there's a sense of pride in knowing I'm doing what he did.

We were a very big, close family, and we still are to this day. And the Lions club is a family. If you need 'em, you know they'd be there. One of the biggest things people pay attention to in our meetings is the health of the members. Is anybody sick? Is there anybody we should be concerned about? That closeness is tough to come by. When you find it, you grab it and you hold onto it.

—Anne Ford



# Leroy Foster

Laurelton Lions Club (Long Island), New York  
Age 64 | Retired Accountant

When I joined the Lions 34 years ago it was certainly not a diverse organization. But we shared a mission and a passion. I was born in the coun-

try—Huntersville, North Carolina—and in my family you learned that helping people was what you did. So when I learned about Lions after

college, I thought about the end result more than I thought about who was what color. I thought about the fact that this organization stands for everything I believe in. I've been very proud to be a Lion.

I was in New York on 9/11, and I was a district governor. We stayed up all night that first night, figuring out how we could



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best make a difference. Lions all over went into action, helping to provide masks, counseling and much more. As I said, nobody cared who was what color. But we do need to reach out to younger people and more diverse people to join. We need to change some of the rigidity within Lions, and we must be more creative—go into colleges, talk about service as a résumé item. That will unite people from diverse backgrounds.

One of my favorite quotes sums up being a Lion: “Vision without action is just dreaming; action without vision just passes the time; vision with action can change the world.”

—Todd Schwartz

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